

**Subject:** School Dept letter - Masks

**Date:** Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 3:06:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** JoAnn Keegan

**To:** Hall, James

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August 10, 2021

Dr. James Hall  
Chief Operating Office  
Lowell Public Schools, Office of Finance and Operations  
155 Merrimack St.  
Lowell, MA 01852

Dr. Hall;

This email serves as a follow-up to our recent telephone conversations. My opinion on a mask mandate for the Lowell Public Schools is that I strongly encourage it. We have not discussed this at a Board of Health Meeting as the Board does not meet until September 1, 2021, so I speak as the Chairperson only.

My opinion is based on the following:

- 1) Masks are effective at mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and all mitigation measures should be utilized in our schools to keep our children IN school all year.
- 2) All mitigation measures are vital given that the current COVID variant is approximately 50% more contagious than the Alpha variant (which was 50% more contagious than the original Wuhan strain.)
- 3) Masks are recommend even for those vaccinated because some vaccinated folks infected with the Delta variant may be contagious and able to transmit the virus.
- 4) COVID-19 cases among children have been on the rise in the US since early July. Approximately 94,000 cases among children were added in the past week, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. About 200 children with COVID-19 were admitted to US hospitals every day over the past week. Fortunately, a vast majority of cases in children haven't required hospitalization.
- 5) The COVID-19 cases are on the rise in Lowell as well as statewide. Lowell's vaccination rate is approximately 9% lower than the State average (large pool of susceptible people).

I trust that this brief summary of the (unfortunate) science of this virus will help aid in your decision making process. It is important to use every measure available to keep our children in school this year. The focus on primary prevention is two-fold: vaccinating our children and preventing the spread of infection, with proven mitigation measures (masks).

Thank you for your attention to this critical public health issue.

Jo-Ann Keegan, RN, MSN  
Chairperson, Lowell Board of Health